

An Account of Two Maps of America Published Respectively in the Years 1550 and 1555. By Henry Phillips, Jr., A.M.

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I.

In the *Cosmographia Universalis* of Sebastian Munster, published at Basle, in 1550, there occurs a large two page map of the New World which is so quaint, so singularly inaccurate, yet with all its faults so suggestive that a description cannot fail to be of interest to all who care to retrace the early history of our country.

The copy of Munster which is in the library of our Society is the German edition of 1563, but contains the same illustrations and maps that occur in the earliest copies of the work. As reprints took place, no changes seem to have been made in the letter-press, and certainly no alterations were effected in the charts and engravings.

North and South America are represented as a large island joined together, where Central America now exists, by a strip of land. All the upper boundary of North America is water. The coast line from what is now called Labrador and New Brunswick to the Gulf of Mexico is not badly outlined; Canada receives the name of *Francisca*; Yucatan is figured as a large island directly west of Cuba, which latter lies immediately to the south of the peninsula now known as Florida. The *Tortugas* islands are thrown far into the bosom of the Gulf of Mexico, to which body of water no name is assigned. Mexico itself appears as *Chamaho*, and a small island, *Pannuco*, is represented near this country, off the mouth of a large river. Jamaica, spelled *Jamica*, lies to the south of Cuba; Hispaniola, directly to the east.

At the point where South America is joined to the Northern Continent is a country which bears the name of *Parias*, marked, "*abundat auro et margaritis.*" The configuration of Mexico is but poorly preserved, and the Pacific coast is dotted with random indentations of rivers and bays. Lower California does not appear, nor yet the Gulf which separates it from Mexico.*

A very large body of water, a continuation of that which forms the boundary of the Northern Continent, in shape and position not unlike to Hudson's Bay, stretches far down to within a short distance from the sea-coast, no great way off from the present site of New York city, New York. Probably this was placed upon the map in conformity with Indian reports of vast interior bodies of water, confusing the Great Lakes of the Northwest, with Hudson's Bay.

The peninsula now known as Florida is quite correctly drawn, although it does not bear any name, but a region of country corresponding

* According to Humboldt, Lower California had been recognized as a peninsula as early as 1530-41.

with the south-western parts of North Carolina, the north-western and northern portions of Georgia, the upper portions of Alabama and Mississippi, and the lower parts of Tennessee, receives the appellation of *Terra florida*. Above this region and trending to the north is a range of mountains, from whose western extremity a very large but nameless river takes its rise, in two diverging branches, at a considerable distance from the sea-coast, and ultimately empties its waters into the Gulf of Mexico. This seems to represent the Mississippi, and is in a reasonably accurate position, except that the junction of the two streams which compose it, is placed too near the river's mouth.* It is possible that some tradition of the Missouri may appear in the north-western branch of this stream.

To the west some distance off, is a large but nameless river taking its rise in a range of mountains which run from east to west. This may be the Rio Grande del Norte, the Texan boundary line.

The Isthmus of Central America is delineated as somewhat larger than it really is. South America is very incorrectly drawn, being too "squat" in appearance. A large river empties on its northern shores into the ocean, and on the land, at the easternmost projection of the Continent there stands a hut constructed of boughs, leaves and branches, from one of which latter a human leg is pendant. Lest there should be any doubt in the mind of the reader as to what all this meant, the word *Canibali* is printed upon this region to show the nature of its inhabitants. The bay of Rio Janeiro, although nameless, is shown, but appears to penetrate much farther into the main land than it really does. At the mouth of this reach of water are islands bearing the name *7 insulæ Margueritarum*.

Farther to the south is a country marked *Regio Gigantum*, and still lower is the *Fretum Magellani*, separating the Southern Continent from a piece of land, whose termination is not shown on the map.

The configuration of the western coast is still more defective. Only one name appears on it, *Catigara*, which is far up towards the north-west. Printed upon the South American Continent are the words, "NOVUS ORBIS, *nova insula Atlantica quam vocant Brasiliæ et Americam*."

The Western portion of the map is filled by the MARE PACIFICUM, in the lower part of which is drawn an old-fashioned, high-pooped, one-masted vessel, above which is the island *Zipangri* surrounded by ARCHIPELAGUS 7448 INSULARUM.

In the extreme north-west of the map is *India superior*, which contains *Cathay*, and its capital city, *Quinsay*. Below the ship are the *insulæ infortunatæ*.

II.

I turn from this map to one which, although published five years later, was evidently engraved at some very much earlier date.

The *Novus Orbis* of Simon Gryncœus, published at Basle, in 1555, con-

*The Mississippi was discovered by De Soto in 1541, but the account of his travels was not published till 1557.

tains what was intended for a representation of the world as then known. It is a very large map, surrounded by a border of wood-cuts, very similar in subject and treatment to those found in Munster, exhibiting cannibals, wigwams, serpents, elephants, &c. Within the border are the names of various winds, and upon the seas are delineated remarkable monsters, fish and mermaids.

The portion of the map upon which America appears is the only one which will claim our attention.

North of Cuba there is no land whatever. This island is represented in the form of a parallelogram extending from Latitude 10° to Latitude 49° North, and lying between Longitude 280° and 290° East from the meridian of Madeira. At its southern extremity flows a narrow strait which separates it from South America, called on the map, AMERICA, TERRA NOVA. The shape of the upper portion of the Southern Continent is not badly preserved, but as it descends it becomes thinner and thinner, ultimately closing in a point of land without any suggestion whatever of the Straits of Magellan. On the northern coast are the *Canibali*, at the west is *Parias*, about Latitude 20° South is *Brasilias*. An island marked *Terra cortesia* almost due west of the northern extremity of Cuba lies in Longitude 310° E and Latitude 50° N. To the south-east of the centre of Cuba, lying between Latitude 20° and 30° North and Longitude 300° and 310° East, is an island called *Isabella*; east and south of this are a cluster of islands designated as *Insula Antiglia*, through which the Tropic of Cancer passes, and just above *Spagnolla*, which is to the south of Cuba.

This comprises all the land shown in the Western Hemisphere except the island of *Zipango*, due west of the centre of Cuba, in Latitude 10° to 30° N., Longitude 260° to 270° East.

The ocean between Europe and Cuba is called *Oceanus Magnus*.

NOTE.—The inaccuracy of this map is really surprising, when we consider the facilities then already in existence for verification. A Spanish *mappa mundi* and hydrographic chart published in 1573 (Lelewel. I. p. CXXXVI), presents the North American coast not badly delineated from Newfoundland down, although exhibiting some uncertainty. The Peninsula of Florida appears under that name, and Lower California is separated from Mexico by a body of water, and Mexico and Central America are quite correctly drawn. Yucatan is shown as a peninsula, and in its proper position. The conformation of the Gulf of Mexico is reasonably accurate. South America is justly drawn, although the portion below the Straits of Magellan is only partially exhibited. The *Canibales* still are attributed to the northern part of Brazil.

The Amazon river appears under that name.